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*THE HERMITAGE  
AND LATER POEMS  
... BY EDWARD  
ROWLAND SILL ...*





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S. R. Sill



# THE HERMITAGE AND LATER POEMS

BY

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*  
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## THE LETTER.

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL, DIED FEBRUARY  
27, 1887.

*I held his letter in my hand,  
And even while I read  
The lightning flashed across the land  
The word that he was dead.*

*How strange it seemed! His living voice  
Was speaking from the page  
Those courteous phrases, tersely choice,  
Light-hearted, witty, sage.*

*I wondered what it was that died!  
The man himself was here,  
His modesty, his scholar's pride,  
His soul serene and clear.*

*These neither death nor time shall dim,  
Still this sad thing must be —  
Henceforth I may not speak to him,  
Though he can speak to me!*

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.



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## THE HERMITAGE.<sup>1</sup>

### I.



LIFE, — a common, cleanly,  
quiet life,  
Full of good citizenship and re-  
pute,  
New, but with promise of prosperity, —  
A well-bred, fair, young-gentlemanly  
life, —  
What business had a girl to bring her  
eyes,  
And her blonde hair, and her clear, ring-  
ing voice,  
And break up life, as a bell breaks a  
dream?  
Had Love Christ's wrath, and did this  
life sell doves

<sup>1</sup> California, Bay of San Francisco, 1866.

In the world's temple, that Love scourged  
it forth  
Beyond the gates? Within, the worship-  
ers, —  
Without, the waste, and the hill-country,  
where  
The life, with smarting shoulders and  
stung heart,  
Unknowing that the hand which scourged  
could heal,  
Drave forth, blind, cursing, in despair to  
die,  
Or work its own salvation out in fear.

---

Old World — old, foolish, wicked World  
— farewell !  
Since the Time-angel left my soul with  
thee,  
Thou hast been a hard step-mother unto  
me.  
Now I at last rebel  
Against thy stony eyes and cruel hands.



I will go seek in far-off lands  
Some quiet corner, where my years shall  
    be  
Still as the shadow of a brooding bird  
That stirs but with her heart-beats. Far,  
    unheard  
May wrangle on the noisy human host,  
While I will face my Life, that silent  
    ghost,  
And force it speak what it would have  
    with me.

Not of the fair young Earth,  
The snow-crowned, sunny-belted globe ;  
Not of its skies, nor Twilight's purple  
    robe,  
Nor pearly dawn ; not of the flowers'  
    birth,  
And Autumn's forest-funerals ; not of  
    storms,  
And quiet seas, and clouds' incessant  
    forms ;  
Not of the sanctuary of the night,

With its solemnities, nor any sight  
And pleasant sound of all the friendly  
day :

But I am tired of what we call our lives ;  
Tired of the endless humming in the  
hives, —

Sick of the bitter honey that we eat,  
And sick of cursing all the shallow  
cheat.

Let me arise, and away  
To the land that guards the dying day,  
Whose burning tear, the evening-star,  
Drops silently to the wave afar ;  
The land where summers never cease  
Their sunny psalm of light and peace.  
Whose moonlight, poured for years untold,  
Has drifted down in dust of gold ;  
Whose morning splendors, fallen in showers,  
Leave ceaseless sunrise in the flowers.

There I will choose some eyrie in the  
hills,  
Where I may build, like a lonely bird,  
And catch the whispered music heard  
Out of the noise of human ills.

---

So, I am here at last ;  
A purer world, whose feet the old, salt  
Past  
Washes against, and leaves it fresh and  
free  
As a new island risen from the sea.

Three dreamy weeks we lay on Ocean's  
breast,  
Rocked asleep, by gentle winds caressed,  
Or crooned with wild wave-lullabies to  
rest.  
A memory of foam and glassy spray ;  
Wave chasing wave, like young sea-beasts  
at play ;  
Stretches of misty silver 'neath the moon,

And night-airs murmuring many a quiet  
tune.

Three long, delicious weeks' monotony  
Of sky, and stars, and sea,  
Broken midway by one day's tropic  
scene  
Of giant plants, tangles of luminous  
green,  
With fiery flowers and purple fruits be-  
tween.

---

I have found a spot for my hermit-  
age, —  
No dank and sunless cave, —  
I come not for a dungeon, nor a cage, —  
Not to be Nature's slave,  
But, as a weary child,  
Unto the mother's faithful arms I flee,  
And seek the sunniest footstool at her  
knee,  
Where I may sit beneath caresses mild,  
And hear the sweet old songs that she  
will sing to me.

'T is a grassy mountain-nook,  
In a gorge, whose foaming brook  
Tumbles through from the heights above,  
Merrily leaping to the light  
From the pine-wood's haunted gloom, —  
As a romping child,  
Affrighted, from a sombre room  
Leaps to the sunshine, laughing with delight:

Be this my home, by man's tread undefiled.

Here sounds no voice but of the mourning dove,

Nor harsher footsteps on the sands appear

Than the sharp, slender hoof-marks of the deer,

Or where the quail has left a zigzag row  
Of lightly printed stars her track to show.

Above me frowns a front of rocky wall,  
Deep cloven into ruined pillars tall  
And sculptures strange ; bald to its dizzy edge,

Save where, in some deep crevice of a  
ledge  
Buttressed by its black shadow hung  
below,  
A solitary pine has cleft the rock, —  
Straight as an arrow, feathered to the tip,  
As if a shaft from the moon-huntress' bow  
Had struck and grazed the cliff's defiant  
lip,  
And stood, still stiffly quivering with the  
shock.

Beyond the gorge a slope runs half-way  
up,  
With hollow curve as for a giant's cup,  
Brimming with blue pine-shadows : then  
in air  
The gray rock rises bare,  
Its front deep-fluted by the sculptor-  
storms  
In moulded columns, rounded forms,  
As if great organ-pipes were chiseled  
there,

Whose anthems are the torrent's roar  
below,

And chanting winds that through the  
pine-tops go.

Here bursts of requiem music sink and  
rise,

When the full moonlight, slowly streaming,  
lies

Like panes of gold on some cathedral  
pave,

While floating mists their silver incense  
wave,

And from on high, through fleecy win-  
dow-bars,

Gaze down the saintly faces of the stars.

Against the huge trunk of a storm-  
snapped tree,

(Whose hollow, ready-hewn by long de-  
cay,

Above, a chimney, lined with slate and  
clay,

Below, a broad arched fireplace makes  
for me,)

I've built of saplings and long limbs a  
hut.

The roof with lacing boughs is tightly  
shut,

Thatched with thick-spreading palms of  
pine,

And tangled over by a wandering vine,

Uprooted from the woods close by,

Whose clasping tendrils climb and twine,

Waving their little hands on high,

As if they loved to deck this nest of mine.

Within, by smooth white stones from the  
brook's beach

My rooms are separated, each from each.

On yonder island-rock my table's spread,

Brook-ringed, that no stray, fasting ant  
may come

To make himself with my wild fare at  
home.

Here will I live, and here my life shall  
be

Serene, still, rooted steadfastly,



Yet pointing skyward, and its motions  
keep

A rhythmic balance, as that cedar tall,  
Whose straight shaft rises from the chasm  
there,

Through the blue, hollow air,  
And, measuring the dizzy deep,  
Leans its long shadow on the rock's gray  
wall.

---

Through the sharp gap of the gorge  
below,  
From my mountains' feet the gaze may go  
Over a stretch of fields, broad-sunned,  
Then glance beyond,  
Across the beautiful bay,  
To that dim ridge, a score of miles away,  
Lifting its clear-cut outline high,  
Azure with distance on the azure sky,  
Whose flocks of white clouds brooding on  
its crests  
Have winged from ocean to their piny  
nests.

Beyond the bright blue water's further  
rim,  
Where waves seem ripples on its far-off  
brim,  
The rich young city lies,  
Diminished to an ant-hill's size.  
I trace its steep streets, ribbing all the hill  
Like narrow bands of steel,  
Binding the city on the shifting sand :  
Thick-pressed between them stand  
Broad piles of buildings, pricked through  
here and there  
By a sharp steeple ; and above, the air  
Murky with smoke and dust, that seem to  
show  
The bright sky saddened by the sin be-  
low.

---

The voice of my wild 'brook is marvel-  
ous ;  
Leaning above it from a jutting rock  
To watch the image of my face, that forms

And breaks, and forms again (as the  
image of God

Is broken and re-gathered in a soul),  
I listen to the chords that sink and swell  
From many a little fall and babbling run.  
That hollow gurgle is the deepest bass ;  
Over the pebbles gush contralto tones,  
While shriller trebles tinkle merrily,  
Running, like some enchanted-fingered  
flute,

Endless chromatics.

Now it is the hum  
And roar of distant streets; the rush of  
winds

Through far-off forests : now the noise of  
rain

Drumming the roof ; the hiss of ocean-  
foam :

Now the swift ripple of piano-keys  
In mad mazurkas, danced by laughing  
girls.

So, night and day, the hurrying brook  
goes on ;

Sometimes in noisy glee, sometimes far  
down,  
Silent along the bottom of the gorge,  
Like a deep passion hidden in the soul,  
That chafes in secret hunger for its sea:  
Yet not so still but that heaven finds its  
course ;  
And not so hid but that the yearning  
night  
Broods over it, and feeds it with her stars.

---

When earth has Eden spots like this for  
man,  
Why will he drag his life where lashing  
storms  
Whip him indoors, the petulant weather's  
slave ?  
There he is but a helpless, naked snail,  
Except he wear his house close at his  
back.  
Here the wide air builds him his palace  
walls, —

Some little corner of it roofed, for sleep ;  
Or he can lie all night, bare to the sky,  
And feel updrawn against the breast of  
    heaven,  
Letting his thoughts stretch out among  
    the stars,  
As the antennæ of an insect grope  
Blindly for food, or as the ivy's shoots  
Clamber from cope and tower to find the  
    light,  
And drink the electric pulses of the sun.

As from that sun we draw the coarser  
    fire  
That swells the veins, and builds the brain  
    and bone,  
So from each star a finer influence streams,  
Kindling within the mortal chrysalis  
The first faint thrills of its new life to  
    come.

Here is no niggard gap of sky above,  
With murk and mist below, but all sides  
    clear, —

Not an inch bated from the full-swung  
dome ;  
Each constellation to the horizon's rim  
Keen-glittering, as if one only need  
Walk to the edge there, spread his wings,  
and float,  
The dark earth spurned behind, into the  
blue.

---

I love thee, thou brown, homely, dear  
old Earth !  
Those fairer planets whither fate may  
lead,  
Whatever marvel be their bulk or speed,  
Ringed with what splendor, belted round  
with fire,  
In glory of perpetual moons arrayed,  
Can ne'er give back the glow and fresh  
desire  
Of youth in that old home where man had  
birth,  
Whose paths he trod through wholesome  
light and shade.

Out of their silver radiance to thy dim  
And clouded orb his eye will turn,  
As an old man looks back to where he  
    played  
About his father's hearth, and finds for  
    him  
No splendor like the fires which there did  
    burn.

See: I am come to live alone with thee.  
Thou hast had many a one, grown old and  
    worn,  
Come to thee weary and forlorn,  
Bent with the weight of human vanity.  
But I come with my life almost untried,  
In thy perpetual presence to abide.  
Teach me thy wisdom ; let me learn the  
    flowers,  
And know the rocks and trees,  
And touch the springs of all thy hidden  
    powers.  
Let the still gloom of thy rock-fastnesses  
Fall deep upon my spirit, till the voice

Of brooks become familiar, and my heart  
rejoice

With joy of birds and winds ; and all the  
hours,

Unmaddened by the babble of vain men,  
Bring thy most inner converse to my ken.

So shall it be, that, when I stand

On that next planet's ruddy-shimmering  
strand,

I shall not seem a pert and forward child  
Seeking to dabble in abstruser lore

With alphabet unlearned, who in disgrace  
Returns, upon his primer yet to pore —

But those examiners, all wise and mild,  
Shall gently lead me to my place,

As one that faithfully did trace

These simpler earthly records o'er and  
o'er.

---

Beckoned at sunrise by the surf's white  
hand,

I have strayed down to sit upon the  
beach,



And hear the oratorio of the Sea.  
On this steep, crumbling bank, where the  
    high tides  
Have crunched the earth away, a crooked  
    oak —  
A hunch-backed dwarf, whose limbs,  
    cramped down by gales,  
Have twisted stiffening back upon them-  
    selves —  
Spreads me a little arbor from the sun.

On the brown, shining beach, all ripple-  
    carved,  
Gleams now and then a pool; so smooth  
    and clear,  
'That, though I cannot see the plover  
    there  
Pacing its farther edge (so much he looks  
The color of the sand), yet I can trace  
His image hanging in the glassy brine —  
Slim legs and rapier-beak — like silver-  
    plate  
With such a pictured bird clean-etched  
    upon it.

Beyond, long curves of little shallow  
waves  
Creep, tremulous with ripples, to the  
shore,  
Till the whole bay seems slowly sliding in,  
With edge of snow that melts against the  
sand.

Above its twinkling blue, where cease-  
lessly  
The white curve of a slender arm of foam  
Is reached along the water, and with-  
drawn,  
A flock of sea-birds darken into specks ;  
Then whiten, as they wheel with sunlit  
wings,  
Winking and wavering against the sky.

The earth for form, the sea for coloring,  
And overhead, fair daughters of the two,  
The clouds, whose curves were moulded  
on the hills,  
Whose tints of pearl and foam the ocean  
gave.

O Sea, thou art all-beautiful, but dumb !  
Thou hast no utterance articulate  
For human ears ; only a restless moan  
Of barren tides, that loathe the living  
    earth  
As alien, striving towards the barren  
    moon.  
Thou art no longer infinite to man :  
Has he not touched thy boundary-shores,  
    and now  
Laid his electric fetters round thy feet ?  
Thy dumb moan saddens me ; let me go  
    back  
And listen to the silence of the hills.

---

At last I live alone :  
No human judgment-seats are here  
Thrust in between man and his Maker's  
    throne,  
With praise to covet, or with frown to  
    fear :  
No small, distorted judgments bless, or  
    blame ;

Only to Him I own  
The inward sense of worth, or flush of  
shame.

God made the man alone ;  
And all that first grand morning walked  
he so.  
Then was he strong and wise, till at the  
noon,  
When tired with joyous wonder he lay  
prone  
For rest and sleep, God let him know  
The subtile sweetness that is bound in  
Two.

Man rises best alone :  
Upward his thoughts stream, like the  
leaping flame,  
Whose base is tempest-blown ;  
Upward and skyward, since from thence  
they came,  
And thither they must flow.  
But when in twos we go,

The lightnings of the brain weave to and  
fro,

Level across the abyss that parts us all ;  
If upward, only slantwise, as we scale  
Slowly together that night-shrouded wall  
Which bounds our reason, lest our reason  
fail.

If linked in threes, and fives,  
However heavenward the spirit strives,  
The lowest stature draws the highest  
down, —

The king must keep the level of the  
clown.

The grosser matter has the greater power  
In all attraction ; every hour  
We slide and slip to lower scales,  
Till weary aspiration fails,  
And that keen fire which might have  
pierced the skies,  
Is quenched and killed in one another's  
eyes.

---

A child had blown a bubble fair  
That floated in the sunny air :  
A hundred rainbows danced and swung  
Upon its surface, as it hung  
In films of changing color rolled,  
Crimson, and amethyst, and gold,  
With faintest streaks of azure sheen,  
And curdling rivulets of green.  
“ If so the surface shines,” cried he,  
“ What marvel must the centre be ! ”  
He caught it — on his empty hands  
A drop of turbid water stands !

With men, to help the moments fly,  
I tossed the ball of talk on high,  
With glancing jest, and random stings,  
Grazing the crests of thoughts and things,  
In many a shifting ray of speech  
That shot swift sparkles, each to each.  
I thought, “ Ah, could we pierce below  
To inner soul, what depths would show ! ”  
In friendships many, loves a few,  
I pierced the inner depths, and knew

'T was but the shell that splendor caught :  
Within, one sour and selfish thought.

I found a grotto, hidden in the gorge,  
Paved by the brook in rare Mosaic work  
Of sand, and lucent depths, and shadow-  
                  streaks

Veining the amber of the sun-dyed wave.  
Between two mossy masses of gray rock  
Lay a clear basin, which, with sun and  
                  shade

Bewitched, a great transparent opal made,  
Over whose broken rims the water ran.

Above each rocky side leaned waving  
                  trees

Whose lace of branches wove a restless  
                  roof,

Trailed over by green vines that sifted  
                  down

A dust of sunshine through the chilly  
                  shade.

Leaning against a trunk of oak, rock-  
                  wedged.

Whose writhen roots were clenched upon  
the stones,  
I was a Greek, and caught the sudden  
flash  
Of a scared Dryad's vanishing robe, and  
heard  
The laughter, half-suppressed, of hiding  
Fauns.  
Up the dark stairway of the tumbling  
stream  
The sun shot through, and struck each  
foamy fall  
Into a silvery veil of dazzling fire.  
Along its shady course, the tossing drops  
By some swift sunbeam ever caught, were  
lit  
To sparkling stars, that fell, and flashed,  
and fell,  
Incessantly rekindled. Bubble-troops  
Came dancing by, to break just at my  
feet ;  
Lo ! every bubble mirrored the whole  
scene —



The streak of blue between the roofing-  
boughs,

And on it my own face in miniature  
Quaintly distorted, as if some small elf  
Peered up at me beneath his glassy dome.

---

If men but knew the mazes of the brain  
And all its crowded pictures, they would  
need

No Louvre or Vatican : behind our brows  
Intricate galleries are built, whose walls  
Are rich with all the splendors of a life.  
Each crimson leaf of every autumn walk,  
Dewdrops of childhood's mornings, every  
scene

From any window where we've chanced  
to stand,

Forgotten sunsets, summer afternoons  
Hang fresh in those immortal galleries.  
Few ever can unlock them, till great Death  
Unrolls our life-long memory as a scroll.  
One key is solitude, and silence one,

And one a quiet mind, content to rest  
In God's sufficiency, and take His world,  
Not dabbling all the Master's work to  
death

With our small interference. God is God.

Yet we must give the children leave to  
use  
Our garden-tools, though they spoil tool  
and plant  
In learning. So the Master may not  
scorn  
Our awkwardness, as with these bungling  
hands  
We try to uproot the ill, and plant with  
good  
Life's barren soil: the child is learning  
use.

Perhaps the angels even are forbid  
To laugh at us, or may not care to laugh,  
With kind eyes pitying our little hurts.

'Tis ludicrous that man should think he  
roams

Freely at will a world planned for his use.  
Lo, what a mite he is! Snatched hither  
    and yon,  
Tossed round the sun, and in its orbit  
    flashed  
Round other centres, orbits without end ;  
His bit of brain too small to even feel  
The spinning of the little hailstone, Earth.  
So his creeds glibly prate of choice and  
    will,  
When his whole fate is an invisible speck  
Whirled through the orbits of Eternity.

---

We think that we believe  
That human souls shall live, and live,  
When trees have rotted into mould,  
And all the rocks which these long hills  
    enfold  
Have crumbled, and beneath new oceans  
    lie.  
But why — ah, why —  
If puny man is not indeed to die,

Watch I with such disdain  
That human speck creeping along the  
plain,  
And turn with such a careless scorn of  
men  
Back to the mountain's brow again,  
And feel more pleased that some small,  
fluttering thing  
Trusts me and hovers near on fearless  
wing,  
Than if the proudest man in all the land  
Had offered me in friendliness his hand?

---

However small the present creature  
man, —  
Ridiculous imitation of the gods,  
Weak plagiarism on some completer  
world, —  
Yet we can boast of that strong race to be.  
The savage broke the attraction which  
binds fast  
The fibres of the oak, and we to-day

By cunning chemistry can force apart  
The elements of the air. That coming  
race

Shall loose the bands by which the earth  
attracts ;

A drop of occult tincture, a spring touched  
Shall outwit gravitation ; men shall float,  
Or lift the hills and set them where they  
will.

The savage crossed the lake, and we the  
sea.

That coming race shall have no bounds  
or bars,

But, like the fledgeling eaglet, leave the  
nest, —

Our earthly eyrie up among the stars, —  
And freely soar, to tread the desolate  
moon,

Or mingle with the neighbor folk of Mars.  
Yea, if the savage learned by sign and  
sound

To bridge the chasm to his fellow's brain,  
Till now we flash our whispers round the  
globe,

That race shall signal over the abyss  
To those bright souls who throng the  
outer courts  
Of life, impatient who shall greet men  
first  
And solve the riddles that we die to know.

---

'Tis night : I sit alone among the hills.  
There is no sound, except the sleepless  
brook,  
Whose voice comes faintly from the  
depths below  
Through the thick darkness, or the sombre pines  
That slumber, murmuring sometimes in  
their dreams.  
Hark! on a fitful gust there came the  
sound  
Of the tide rising yonder on the bay.  
It dies again : 't was like the rustling  
noise  
Of a great army mustering secretly.

There rose an owl's cry, from the woods  
below,

Like a lost spirit's. — Now all 's still  
again. —

'T is almost fearful to sit here alone  
And feel the deathly silence and the  
dark.

I will arise and shout, and hear at least  
My own voice answer. — Not an echo  
even !

I wish I had not uttered that wild cry ;  
It broke with such a shock upon the air,  
Whose leaden silence closed up after it,  
And seemed to clap together at my ears.  
The black depths of these muffled woods  
are thronged

With shapes that wait some signal to  
swoop out,  
And swirl around and madden me with  
fear.

I will go climb that bare and rocky height  
Into the clearer air.

So, here I breathe ;  
That silent darkness smothered me.

Away

Across the bay, the city with its lights  
Twinkling against the horizon's dusky line,  
Looks a sea-dragon, crawled up on the  
shore,  
With rings of fire across his rounded  
back,  
And luminous claws spread out among  
the hills.  
Above, the glittering heavens. — Magnifi-  
cent !

Oh, if a man could be but as a star,  
Having his place appointed, here to rise,  
And there to set, unchanged by earthly  
change,  
Content if it can guide some wandering  
bark,  
Or be a beacon to some home-sick soul !

Those city-lights again : they draw my  
gaze



As if some secret human sympathy  
Still held my heart down from the lonely  
    heaven.

A new-born constellation, setting there  
Below the Sickle's ruby-hilted curve,  
They gleam — Not so ! No constella-  
    tion they ;

I mock the sad, strong stars that never  
    fail

In their eternal patience ; from below  
Comes that pale glare, like the faint,  
    sulphurous flame

Which plays above the ashes of a fire :  
So trembles the dull flicker of those  
    lamps

Over the burnt-out energies of man.

## II.

A month since I last laid my pencil  
    down, —

An April, fairer than the Atlantic June,  
Whose calendar of perfect days was kept

By daily blossoming of some new flower.  
The fields, whose carpets now were silken  
white,

Next week were orange-velvet, next, sea-  
blue.

It was as if some central fire of bloom,  
From which in other climes a random  
root

Is now and then shot up, here had burst  
forth

And overflowed the fields, and set the  
land

Aflame with flowers. I watched them  
day by day,

How at the dawn they wake, and open  
wide

Their little petal-windows, how they turn  
Their slender necks to follow round the  
sun,

And how the passion they express all day  
In burning color, steals forth with the  
dew

All night in odor.

I have wandered much  
These weeks, but everywhere a restless  
mind

Has dogged me, like the shadow at my  
heels.

Sometimes I watched the morning mist  
arise,

Like an imprisoned Genie from the stream,  
And wished that death would come on me  
like dawn,

Drawing the spirit, that white, vaporous  
mist,

Up from this noisy, fretted stream of life,  
To fall where God will, in his bounteous  
showers.

Sometimes I walked at sunset on the edge  
Of the steep gorge, and saw my shadow  
pace

Along a shadow-wall across the abyss,  
And felt that we, with all our phantom  
deeds,

Are but far-slanted shadows of some life  
That walks between our planet and its  
God.

All the long nights — those memory-  
haunted nights,  
When sleepless conscience would not let  
me sleep,  
But stung, and stung, and pointed to the  
world  
Which like a coward I had left behind,  
I watched the heavens, where week by  
week the moon  
Slow swelled its silver bud, blossomed full  
gold,  
And slowly faded.

Laid the pencil down —  
Why not? Are there not books enough?  
Is man  
A sick child that must be amused by  
songs,  
Or be made sicker with their foolish noise?

Then illness came: I should have ar-  
gued, once,

That the ill body gave me those ill  
thoughts ;

But I have learned that spirit, though it be  
Subtile, and hard to trace, is mightier  
Than matter, and I know the poisoned  
mind

Poisoned its shell. Three days of fever-  
fire

Burned out my strength, leaving me  
scarcely power

To reach the brook's side and my scanty  
food.

What would I not have given to hear the  
voice

Of some one who would raise my throb-  
bing head

And shade the fevering sun, and cool my  
hand

In her moist palms ! But I lay there,  
alone.

Blessed be sickness, which cuts down our  
pride

And bares our helplessness. I have had  
new thoughts.

I think the fever burned away some lies  
Which clogged the truthful currents of  
the brain.

Am I quite happy here? Have I the  
right,

As wholly independent, to scorn men?

What do I owe them — self? Should I  
be I,

Born in these hills? A savage rather!  
Food,

The sailor-bread? Yes, that took mill  
and men :

Yet flesh and fowl are free ; but powder  
and gun —

What human lives went to the making of  
them?

I am dependent as the villager

Who lives by the white wagon's daily  
round.

Yea, better feed upon the ox, to which

The knife is mercy after slavery,

Than kill the innocent birds, and trustful  
deer

Whose big blue eyes have almost human  
pain ;

That's murder !

I scorned books : to those same books  
I owe the power to scorn them.

I despised

Men : from themselves I drew the pure  
ideal

By which to measure them.

At woman's love

I laughed : but to that love I owe

The hunger for a more abiding love.

Their nestlings in our hearts leave vacant  
there

These hollow places, like a lark's round  
nest

Left empty in the grass, and filled with  
flowers.

What do I here alone ? 'T was not so  
strange,

Weary of discords, that I chose to hear

The one, clear, perfect note of solitude ;

But now it plagues the ear, that one shrill  
note :

Give me the chords back, even though  
some ring false.

---

Unmarried to the steel, the flint is cold :  
Strike one to the other, and they wake in  
fire.

A solitary fagot will not burn :  
Bring two, and cheerily the flame ascends.  
Alone, man is a lifeless stone ; or lies  
A charring ember, smouldering into ash.

---

If the man riding yonder looks a speck,  
The town an ant-hill, that is but the  
trick

Of our perspective : wisdom merely means  
Correction of the angles at the eye.

I hold my hand up, so, before my face, —  
It blots ten miles of country, and a town.



This little lying lens, that twists the rays,  
So cheats the brain that My house, My  
    affairs,  
My hunger, or My happiness, My ache,  
And My religion, fill immensity !  
Yours merely dot the landscape casually.  
'T is well God does not measure a man's  
    worth  
By the image on his neighbor's retina.

---

I am alone : the birds care not for me,  
Except to sing a little farther off,  
With looks that say, " What does this fel-  
    low here ? "  
The loud brook babbles only for the  
    flowers :  
The mountain and the forest take me not  
Into their meditations ; I disturb  
Their silence, as a child that drags his toy  
Across a chapel's porch. The viewless  
    ones  
Who flattered me to claim their company

By gleams of thought they tossed to me  
for alms,  
About their grander matters turn, nor  
deign  
To notice me, unless it were to say —  
As we put off a troublesome child —  
“There, go !  
Men are your fellows, go and mate with  
them ! ”

---

If I could find one soul that would not  
lie,  
I would go back, and we would arm our  
hands,  
And strike at every ugly weed that stands  
In God's wide garden of the world, and  
try,  
Obedient to the Gardener's commands,  
To set some smallest flowers before we  
die.

One such I had found, —  
But she was bound,

Fettered and led, bid for and sold,  
Chained to a stone by a ring of gold.

In a stony sense the stone loved her,  
too :

Between our places the river was broad,  
Should she tread on a broken heart to go  
through —

Could she put a man's life in mid-stream  
to be trod,  
To come over dry-shod ?

---

Shame ! that a man with hand and  
brain

Should, like a love-lorn girl, complain,  
Rhyming his dainty woes anew,  
When there is honest work to do !

What work, what work ? Is God not  
wise

To rule the world He could devise ?  
Yet see thou, though the realm be His,

He governs it by deputies.  
Enough to know of Chance and Luck,  
The stroke we choose to strike is struck;  
The deed we slight will slighted be,  
In spite of all Necessity.  
The Parcæ's web of good and ill  
They weave with human shuttles still,  
And fate is fate through man's free will.

---

With sullen thoughts that smoulder  
hour by hour,  
In vague expectancy of help or hope  
Which still eludes my brain, waiting I sit  
Like a blind beggar at a palace-gate,  
Who hears the rustling past of silks, and  
airs  
Of costly odor mock him blowing by,  
And feels within a dull and aching wish  
That the proud wall would let some  
coping down  
To crush him dead, and let him have his  
rest.

No help from men : they could not, if  
they would.

And God? He lets His world be wrung  
with pain.

No help at all then? Let life be in vain :  
To get no help is surely greatest gain ;  
To taunt the hunger down is sweetest  
food.

---

O mocker, Memory ! From what float-  
ing cloud,  
Or from what witchery of the haunted  
wood,  
Or faintest perfumes, softly drifting  
through  
The lupines' lattice-bars of white and  
blue,  
Steals back upon my soul this weaker  
mood?  
My heart is dreaming ;—in a shadowy  
room  
I breathe the vague scent of a jasmin-  
bloom

That floats on waves of music, softer  
    played,  
Till song and odor all the brain pervade ;  
Swiftly across my cheek there sweeps the  
    thrill  
Of burning lips, — then all is hushed and  
    still ;  
And round the vision in unearthly awe  
Deeps of enchanted starlight seem to  
    draw,  
In which my soul sinks, falling noise-  
    lessly, —  
As from a lone ship, far-off, in the night,  
Out of a child's hand slips a pebble white,  
Glimmering and fading down the awful  
    sea.

---

That night, which pushed me out of  
    Paradise,  
When the last guest had taken his mask  
    of smiles  
And gone, she wheeled a sofa from the  
    light

Where I sat touching the piano-keys,  
And begged me play her weariness away.  
I played all sweet and solemn airs I knew,  
And when, with music mesmerized, she  
slept,

I made the deep chords tell her dreams  
my love.

Once, when they grew too passionate, I  
saw

The faint blush ripen in their glow, and  
chide,

Even in dreams, the rash, tumultuous  
thought.

Then when I made them say, "Sleep  
on, dream on,

For now we are together; when thou  
wak'st

Forevermore we are alone — alone,"

She sighed in sleep, and waked not: then  
I rose,

And softly stooped my head, and, half in  
awe,

Half passion-rapt, I kissed her lips fare-  
well.

— Only the meek-mouthed blossoms  
    kiss I now,  
Or the cold cheek that sometimes comes  
    at night  
In haunted dreams, and brushes past my  
    own.

Ah, what hast thou to do with me, sweet  
    song —  
    Why hauntest thou and vexest so my  
        dreams?  
Have I not turned away from thee so  
    long —  
    So long, and yet the starry midnight  
        seems  
Astir with tremulous music, as of old, —  
Forbidden memories opening, fold on  
    fold?

O ghost of Love, why, with thy rose-leaf  
    lips,  
Dost thou still mock my sleep with  
    kisses warm,



Torturing my dreams with touching finger-  
tips,

That madden me to clasp thy phantom  
form?

Have I not earned, by all these tears, at  
last,

The right to rest untroubled by that Past?

---

Unto thy patient heart, my mother  
Earth,

I come, a weary child.

I have no claim, save that thou gav'st me  
birth,

And hast sustained me with thy nurture  
mild.

I have stood up alone these many years ;  
Now let me come and lie upon my face,  
And spread my hands among the dewy  
grass,

Till the slow wind's mesmeric touches pass  
Above my brain, and all its throbbing  
chase ;

Into thy bosom take these bitter tears,  
And let them seem unto the innocent  
flowers

Only as dew, or heaven's gentle showers ;  
Till, quieted and hushed against thy  
breast,

I can forget to weep,  
And sink at last to sleep, —  
Long sleep and rest.

---

Her face !

It must have been her face, —  
No other one was ever half so fair, —  
No other head e'er bent with such meek  
grace  
Beneath that weight of beautiful blonde  
hair.

In a carriage on the street of the town,  
Where I had strayed in walking from the  
bay,

Just as the sun was going down,  
Shielding her sight from his latest ray,  
She sat, and scanned with eager eye

The faces of the passers-by.  
Whom was she looking for? Not me —  
Yet what wild purpose can it be  
That tempted her to this wild land?  
— I marked that on her lifted hand  
The diamonds no longer shine  
Of the ring that meant, not mine — not  
mine !

Ah fool — fool — fool! crawl back to  
thy den,  
Like a wounded beast as thou art, again ;  
Whoever she be, not thine — not thine !

---

I sat last night on yonder ridge of rocks  
To see the sun set over Tamelpais,  
Whose tented peak, suffused with rosy  
mist,  
Blended the colors of the sea and sky  
And made the mountain one great ame-  
thyst  
Hanging against the sunset.

In the west  
There lay two clouds which parted company,  
Floating like two soft-breasted swans, and sailed  
Farther and farther separate, till one stayed  
To make a mantle for the evening-star ;  
The other wept itself away in rain.  
A fancy seized me ; — if, in other worlds,  
That Spirit from afar should call to me,  
Across some starry chasm impassable,  
Weeping, “ Oh, hadst thou only come to me ! —  
I loved you so ! — I prayed each night  
that God  
Would send you to me ! Now, alas ! too late,  
Too late — farewell ! ” and still again,  
“ farewell ! ”  
Like the pulsation of a silenced bell  
Whose sobs beat on within the brain.

I rose,  
And smote my staff strongly against the  
ground,  
And set my face homeward, and set my  
heart  
Firm in a passionate purpose : there, in  
haste,  
With that one echo goading me to speed,  
“ If it should be too late — if it should be  
Too late — too late ! ” I took a pen and  
wrote :

“ Dear Soul, if I am mad to speak to  
thee,  
And this faint glimmer which I call a hope  
Be but the corpse-light on the grave of  
hope —  
If thou, O darling Star, art in the West  
To be my Evening-star, and watch my day  
Fade slowly into desolate twilight, burn  
This folly in the flames ; and scattered  
with  
Its ashes, let my madness be forgot.

But if not so, oh be my Morning-star,  
And crown my East with splendor : come  
to me !”

---

A stern, wild, broken place for a man to  
walk  
And muse on broken fortunes ; a rare  
place, —  
There in the Autumn weather, cool and  
still,  
With the warm sunshine clinging round  
the rocks  
Softly, in pity, like a woman's love, —  
To wait for some one who can never  
come —  
As a man there was waiting. Overhead  
A happy bird sang quietly to himself,  
Unconscious of such sombre thoughts  
below,  
To which the song was background : —

“Yet how men  
Sometimes will struggle, writhe, and  
scream at death !

It were so easy now, in the mild air,  
To close the senses, slowly sleep, and  
die ;  
To cease to be the shaped and definite  
cloud,  
And melt away into the fathomless  
blue ; —  
Only to touch this crimson thread of life,  
Whose steady ripple pulses in my wrist,  
And watch the little current soak the  
grass,  
Till the haze came, then darkness, and  
then rest.  
Would God be angry if I stopped one life  
Among His myriads — such a worthless  
one ?  
If I should pray, I wonder would He send  
An angel down out of that great, white  
cloud,  
(He surely could spare one from praising  
Him,)  
To tell if there is any better way  
Than — Look ! Why, that is grand,  
now ! (Am I mad ?

I did not think I should go mad!)  
That 's grand —  
One of the blessed spirits come like this  
To meet a poor, lean man among the  
rocks,  
And answer questions for him ? ”

There she stood,  
With blonde hair blowing back, as if the  
breeze  
Blew a light out of it, that ever played  
And hovered at her shoulders. Such  
blue eyes  
Mirrored the dreamy mountain dis-  
tances, —  
(Yet, are the angels' faces thin and wan  
Like that ; and do they have such  
mouths, so drawn,  
As if a sad song, some sad time, had died  
Upon the lips, and left its echo there ?)

And the man rose, and stood with  
folded hands



And head bent, and his downcast looks in  
awe  
Touching her garment's hem, that, when  
she spoke,  
Trembled a little where it met her feet.

“I am come, because you called to me  
to come.

What were all other voices when I heard  
The voice of my own soul's soul call to  
me?

You knew I loved you — oh, you must  
have known!

Was it a noble thing to do, you think,  
To leave a lonely girl to die down there  
In the great empty world, and come up  
here

To make a martyr's pillar of your pride?  
There has been nobler work done, there  
in the world,  
Than you have done this year!”

Then cried the man :

“O voice that I have prayed for — O sad  
voice,  
And woful eyes, spare me if I have  
sinned !  
There was a little ring you used to  
wear ” —

“O strange, wild Fates, that balance  
bliss and woe  
On such poor straws ! It was a brother's  
gift.”

“You never told me ” —

“Did you ever ask ? ”

“You, too, were surely prouder then  
than now ! ”

“Dear, I am sadder now : the head  
must bend  
A little, when one 's weeping.”

Then the man, —  
While half his mind, bewildered, at a  
flash  
Took in the wide, lone place, the singing  
bird,  
The sunshine streaming past them like a  
wind,  
And the broad tree that moved as though  
it breathed :  
“Oh, if 't is possible that in the world  
There lies some low, mean work for me  
to do,  
Let me go there alone : I am ashamed  
To wear life's crown when I flung down  
its sword.  
Crammed full of pride, and lust, and lit-  
tleness,  
O God, I am not worthy of thy gifts !  
Let me find penance, till, years hence,  
perchance,  
Made pure by toil, and scourged with pain  
and prayer ” —

Then a voice answered through His  
creature's lips, —  
“God asks no penance but a better life.  
He purifies by pain — He only ; 't is  
A remedy too dangerous for our  
Blind pharmacy. Lo ! we have tried that  
way,  
And borne what fruit, or blossoms even,  
save one  
Poor passion - flower ! Come, take thy  
happiness ;  
In happy hearts are all the sunbeams  
forged  
That brighten up our weatherbeaten  
world.  
Come back with me — Come ! for I love  
you — Come ! ”

---

If it was not a dream : perchance it  
was —  
Often it seems so, and I wonder when  
I shall awaken on the mountain-side,

With a little bitter taste left in the mouth  
Of too much sleep, or too much happiness,  
And sigh, and wish that I might dream  
again.

## STARLIGHT.



HEY think me daft, who nightly  
meet

My face turned starward, while  
my feet  
Stumble along the unseen street ;

But should man's thoughts have only room  
For Earth, his cradle and his tomb,  
Not for his Temple's grander gloom ?

And must the prisoner all his days  
Learn but his dungeon's narrow ways  
And never through its grating gaze ?

Then let me linger in your sight,  
My only amaranths ! blossoming bright  
As over Eden's cloudless night.

The same vast belt, and square, and  
crown,  
That on the Deluge glittered down,  
And lit the roofs of Bethlehem town !

Ye make me one with all my race,  
A victor over time and space,  
Till all the path of men I pace.

Far-speeding backward in my brain  
We build the Pyramids again,  
And Babel rises from the plain ;

And climbing upward on your beams  
I peer within the Patriarchs' dreams,  
Till the deep sky with angels teems.

My Comforters ! — Yea, why not mine ?  
The power that kindled you doth shine,  
In man, a mastery divine ;

That Love which throbs in every star,  
And quickens all the worlds afar,  
Beats warmer where his children are.

The shadow of the wings of Death  
Broods over us ; we feel his breath :  
“ Resurgam ” still the spirit saith.

These tired feet, this weary brain,  
Blotted with many a mortal stain,  
May crumble earthward — not in vain.

With swifter feet that shall not tire,  
Eyes that shall fail not at your fire,  
Nearer your splendors I aspire.



## A DEAD BIRD IN WINTER.



HE cold, hard sky and hidden  
sun,  
The stiffened trees that shiver  
so,  
With bare twigs naked every one  
To these harsh winds that freeze the  
snow, —

It was a bitter place to die,  
Poor birdie ! Was it easier, then,  
On such a world to shut thine eye,  
And sleep away from life, than when

The apple-blossoms tint the air,  
And, twittering in the sunny trees,  
Thy fellow-songsters flit and pair,  
Breasting the warm, caressing breeze ?

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Nay, it were easiest, I feel,  
    Though 't were a brighter Earth to  
        lose,  
To let the summer shadows steal  
    About thee, bringing their repose ;

When the noon hush was on the air,  
    And on the flowers the warm sun  
        shined,  
And Earth seemed all so sweet and fair,  
    That He who made it must be kind.

So I, too, could not bear to go  
    From Life in this unfriendly clime,  
To lie beneath the crusted snow,  
    When the dead grass stands stiff with  
        rime ;

But under those blue skies of home,  
    Far easier were it to lie down,  
Where the perpetual violets bloom,  
    And the rich moss grows never brown ;

Where linnets never cease to build

    Their nests, in boughs that always wave  
To odorous airs, with blessing filled  
    From nestled blossoms round my grave.

## SPRING TWILIGHT.



SINGING in the rain, robin ?

Rippling out so fast  
All thy flute-like notes, as if  
This singing were thy last !

After sundown, too, robin ?  
Though the fields are dim,  
And the trees grow dark and still,  
Dripping from leaf and limb.

'Tis heart-broken music —  
That sweet, faltering strain, —  
Like a mingled memory,  
Half ecstasy, half pain.

Surely thus to sing, robin,  
Thou must have in sight

Beautiful skies behind the shower,  
And dawn beyond the night.

Would thy faith were mine, robin !  
Then, though night were long,  
All its silent hours should melt  
Their sorrow into song.

## EVENING.



THE Sun is gone : those glorious  
chariot-wheels  
Have sunk their broadening  
spokes of flame, and left  
Thin rosy films wimpled across the West,  
Whose last faint tints melt slowly in the  
blue,  
As the last trembling cadence of a song  
Fades into silence sweeter than all sound.

Now the first stars begin to tremble  
forth  
Like the first instruments of an orchestra  
Touched softly, one by one. — There in  
the East  
Kindles the glory of moonrise : how its  
waves

Break in a surf of silver on the clouds! —  
White, motionless clouds, like soft and  
snowy wings  
Which the great Earth spreads, sailing  
round the Sun.

O silent stars! that over ages past  
Have shone serenely as ye shine to-night,  
Unseal, unseal the secret that ye keep!  
Is it not time to tell us why we live?  
Through all these shadowy corridors of  
years,  
(Like some gray Priest, who through the  
Mysteries  
Led the blindfolded Neophyte in fear,)  
Time leads us blindly onward, till in  
wrath  
Tired Life would seize and throttle its  
stern guide,  
And force him tell us *whither* and *how*  
*long*.  
But Time gives back no answer — only  
points

With motionless finger to eternity,  
Which deepens over us, as that deep  
sky

Darkens above me : only its vestibule  
Glimmers with scattered stars ; and down  
the West

A silent meteor slowly slides afar,  
As though, pacing the garden-walks of  
heaven,

Some musing seraph had let fall a flower.



## EASTERN WINTER.



OLD — cold — the very sun looks  
cold,  
With those thin rays of chilly  
gold

Laid on that gap of bluish sky  
That glazes like a dying eye.

The naked trees are shivering,  
Each cramped and bare branch quivering,  
Cutting the bleak wind into blades,  
Whose edge to brain and bone invades.

That hard ground seems to ache, all day,  
Even for a sheet of snow, to lay  
Upon its icy feet and knees,  
Stretched stiffly there to freeze and freeze.

And yon shrunk mortal — what 's within  
That nipped and winter-shriveled skin?  
The pinched face drawn in peevish lines,  
The voice that through his blue lips  
whines, —

The frost has got within, you see, —  
Left but a selfish *me* and *me*:  
The heart is chilled, its nerves are numb,  
And love has long been frozen dumb.

Ah, give me back the clime I know,  
Where all the year geraniums blow,  
And hyacinth-buds bloom white for snow;

Where hearts beat warm with life's de-  
light,  
Through radiant winter's sunshine bright,  
And summer's starry deeps of night;

Where man may let earth's beauty thaw  
The wintry creed which Calvin saw,  
That God is only Power and Law;

And out of Nature's bible prove,  
That here below as there above  
Our Maker — Father — God — is Love.

## A PRAYER.



GOD, our Father, if we had but  
truth !

Lost truth — which thou per-  
chance

Didst let man lose, lest all his wayward  
youth

He waste in song and dance ;

That he might gain, in searching, mightier  
powers

For manlier use in those foreshadowed  
hours.

If, blindly groping, he shall oft mistake,

And follow twinkling motes

Thinking them stars, and the one voice  
forsake

Of Wisdom for the notes

Which mocking Beauty utters here and  
there,

Thou surely wilt forgive him, and forbear !

Oh love us, for we love thee, Maker —  
God !

And would creep near thy hand,  
And call thee "Father, Father," from the  
sod

Where by our graves we stand,  
And pray to touch, fearless of scorn or  
blame,

Thy garment's hem, which Truth and  
Good we name.

## THE POLAR SEA.



T the North, far away,  
Rolls a great sea for aye,  
Silently, awfully.

Round it on every hand  
Ice-towers majestic stand,  
Guarding this silent sea  
Grimly, invincibly.  
Never there man hath been,  
Who hath come back again,  
Telling to ears of men  
What is this sea within.  
Under the starlight,  
Rippling the moonlight,  
Drinking the sunlight,  
Desolate, never heard nor seen,  
Beating forever it hath been.

From our life far away  
Roll the dark waves, for aye,  
Of an Eternity,  
Silently, awfully.  
Round it on every hand  
Death's icy barriers stand,  
Guarding this silent sea  
Grimly, invincibly.  
Never there man hath been  
Who could return again,  
Telling to mortal ken  
What is within the sea  
Of that Eternity.

Terrible is our life —  
In its whole blood-written history  
Only a feverish strife ;  
In its beginning, a mystery —  
In its wild ending, an agony.  
Terrible is our death —  
Black-hanging cloud over Life's setting  
sun,  
Darkness of night when the daylight is  
done.

In the shadow of that cloud,  
Deep within that darkness' shroud,  
Rolls the ever-throbbing sea ;  
And we — all we —  
Are drifting rapidly  
And floating silently  
Into that unknown sea —  
Into Eternity.



## THE FUTURE.



HAT may we take into the vast  
Forever?

That marble door

Admits no fruit of all our long endeavor,  
No fame-wreathed crown we wore,  
No garnered lore.

What can we bear beyond the unknown  
portal?

No gold, no gains

Of all our toiling : in the life immortal

No hoarded wealth remains,

Nor gilds, nor stains.

Naked from out that far abyss behind us

We entered here :

No word came with our coming, to re-  
mind us

What wondrous world was near,  
No hope, no fear.

Into the silent, starless Night before us,  
Naked we glide :  
No hand has mapped the constellations  
o'er us,  
No comrade at our side,  
No chart, no guide.

Yet fearless toward that midnight, black  
and hollow,  
Our footsteps fare :  
The beckoning of a Father's hand we fol-  
low —  
His love alone is there,  
No curse, no care.

## THE NORTH WIND.



LL night, beneath the flashing  
hosts of stars,

The North poured forth the pas-  
sion of its soul

In mighty longings for the tawny South,  
Sleeping afar among her orange-blooms.

All night, through the deep cañon's organ-  
pipes,

Swept down the grand orchestral harmo-  
nies

Tumultuous, till the hills' rock buttresses  
Trembled in unison.

The sun has risen,  
But still the storming sea of air beats on,  
And o'er the broad green slopes a flood  
of light

Comes streaming through the heavens  
like a wind,  
Till every leaf and twig becomes a lyre  
And thrills with vibrant splendor.

Down the bay  
The furrowed blue, save that 't is starred  
with foam,  
Is bare and empty as the sky of clouds ;  
For all the little sails, that yesterday  
Flocked past the islands, now have furled  
their wings,  
And huddle frightened at the wharves —  
just as,  
A moment since, a flock of twittering  
birds  
Whirled through the almond trees like  
scattered leaves,  
And hid beyond the hedge.

How the old oaks  
Stand stiffly to it, and wrestle with the  
storm !

While the tall eucalyptus' plummy tops  
Tumble and toss and stream with quivering  
light.

Hark! when it lulls a moment at the ear,  
The fir-trees sing their sea-song: — now  
again

The roar is all about us like a flood;  
And like a flood the fierce light shines,  
and burns

Away all distance, till the far blue ridge,  
That rims the ocean, rises close at hand,  
And high, Prometheus-like, great Tamal-  
pais

Lifts proudly his grand front, and bears  
his scar,

Heaven's scath of wrath, defiant like a  
god.

I thank thee, glorious wind! Thou bring-  
est me

Something that breathes of mountain  
crags and pines,

Yea, more — from the unsullied, farthest  
North,

Where crashing icebergs jar like thunder-  
shocks,

And midnight splendors wave and fade  
and flame,

Thou bring'st a keen, fierce joy. So wilt  
thou help

The soul to rise in strength, as some great  
wave

Leaps forth, and shouts, and lifts the  
ocean-foam,

And rides exultant round the shining  
world.

## CALIFORNIA WINTER.



HIS is not winter: where is the  
crisp air,  
And snow upon the roof, and  
frozen ponds,  
And the star-fire that tips the icicle?

Here blooms the late rose, pale and  
odorless;  
And the vague fragrance in the garden  
walks  
Is but a doubtful dream of mignonette.  
In some smooth spot, under a sleeping  
oak  
That has not dreamed of such a thing as  
spring,  
The ground has stolen a kiss from the  
cool sun

And thrilled a little, and the tender grass  
Has sprung untimely, for these great  
bright days,

Staring upon it, will not let it live.

The sky is blue, and 't is a goodly time,  
And the round, barren hillsides tempt the  
feet;

But 't is not winter : such as seems to  
man

What June is to the roses, sending floods  
Of life and color through the tingling  
veins.

It is a land without a fireside. Far  
Is the old home, where, even this very  
night,

Roars the great chimney with its glorious  
fire,

And old friends look into each other's  
eyes

Quietly, for each knows the other's trust.

Heaven is not far away such winter  
nights :



The big white stars are sparkling in the  
east,

And glitter in the gaze of solemn eyes ;  
For many things have faded with the flow-  
ers,

And many things their resurrection wait ;  
Earth like a sepulchre is sealed with  
frost,

And Morn and Even beside the silent  
door

Sit watching, and their soft and folded  
wings

Are white with feathery snow.

Yet even here

We are not quite forgotten by the Hours,  
Could human eyes but see the beautiful  
Save through the glamour of a memory.  
Soon comes the strong south wind, and  
shouts aloud

Its jubilant anthem. Soon the singing  
rain

Comes from warm seas, and in its skyey  
tent

Enwraps the drowsy world. And when,  
    some night,  
Its flowing folds invisibly withdraw,  
Lo ! the new life in all created things.  
The azure mountains and the ocean gates  
Against the lovely sky stand clean and  
    clear  
As a new purpose in the wiser soul.

## THE LOVER'S SONG.



LEND me thy fillet, Love !

I would no longer see ;  
Cover mine eyelids close awhile,  
And make me blind like thee.

Then might I pass her sunny face,  
And know not it was fair ;  
Then might I hear her voice, nor guess  
Her starry eyes were there.

Ah ! banished so from stars and sun —  
Why need it be my fate ?  
If only she might dream me good  
And wise, and be my mate !

Lend her thy fillet, Love !  
Let her no longer see :  
If there is hope for me at all,  
She must be blind like thee.

## A TROPICAL MORNING AT SEA.



SKY in its lucent splendor lifted  
Higher than cloud can be ;  
Air with no breath of earth to  
stain it,  
Pure on the perfect sea.

Crests that touch and tilt each other,  
Jostling as they comb ;  
Delicate crash of tinkling water,  
Broken in pearling foam.

Plashings — or is it the pinewood's whis-  
pers,  
Babble of brooks unseen,  
Laughter of winds when they find the  
blossoms,  
Brushing aside the green ?

Waves that dip, and dash, and sparkle ;  
Foam-wreaths slipping by,  
Soft as a snow of broken roses  
Afloat over mirrored sky.

Off to the East the steady sun-track  
Golden meshes fill —  
Webs of fire, that lace and tangle,  
Never a moment still.

Liquid palms but clap together,  
Fountains, flower-like, grow —  
Limpid bells on stems of silver —  
Out of a slope of snow.

Sea-depths, blue as the blue of violets —  
Blue as a summer sky,  
When you blink at its arch sprung over  
Where in the grass you lie.

Dimly an orange bit of rainbow  
Burns where the low west clears,  
Broken in air, like a passionate promise  
Born of a moment's tears.

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Thinned to amber, rimmed with silver,  
Clouds in the distance dwell,  
Clouds that are cool, for all their color,  
Pure as a rose-lipped shell.

Fleets of wool in the upper heavens  
Gossamer wings unfurl ;  
Sailing so high they seem but sleeping  
Over yon bar of pearl.

What would the great world lose, I wonder —

Would it be missed or no —  
If we stayed in the opal morning,  
Floating forever so ?

Swung to sleep by the swaying water,  
Only to dream all day —  
Blow, salt wind from the north upstarting,  
Scatter such dreams away !

## A FOOLISH WISH.



WHY need I seek some burden  
small to bear  
Before I go?

Will not a host of nobler souls be here,  
Heaven's will to do?  
Of stronger hands, unfailing, unafraid?  
O silly soul! what matters my small aid  
Before I go!

I tried to find, that I might show to them,  
Before I go,  
The path of purer lives: the light was  
dim, —  
I do not know  
If I had found some footprints of the way;  
It is too late their wandering feet to stay,  
Before I go.

I would have sung the rest some song of  
cheer,

Before I go ;

But still the chords rang false ; some jar  
of fear

Some jangling woe.

And at the end I cannot weave one  
chord

To float into their hearts my last warm  
word,

Before I go.

I would be satisfied if I might tell,

Before I go,

That one warm word, — how I have loved  
them well,

Could they but know !

And would have gained for them some  
gleam of good ;

Have sought it long ; still seek, — if but  
I could !

Before I go.



'Tis a child's longing, on the beach at  
play :

“Before I go,”

He begs the beckoning mother, “Let me  
stay

One shell to throw !”

'Tis coming night ; the great sea climbs  
the shore, —

“Ah, let me toss one little pebble more,  
Before I go !”

## EVERY-DAY LIFE.



HE marble-smith, at his morning  
task

Merrily glasses the blue-veined  
stone,

With stout hands circling smooth. You  
ask,

“What will it be, when it is done?”

“A shaft for a young girl’s grave.” Both  
hands

Go back with a will to their sinewy  
play;

And he sings like a bird, as he swaying  
stands,

A rollicking stave of Love and May.

## BEFORE SUNRISE IN WINTER.



PURPLE cloud hangs half-way  
down ;

Sky, yellow gold below ;  
The naked trees, beyond the town,  
Like masts against it show —

Bare masts and spars of our earth-ship,  
With shining snow-sails furled ;  
And through the sea of space we slip,  
That flows all round the world.

## SIBYLLINE BARTERING.



ATE, the gray Sibyl, with kind  
eyes above  
Closely locked lips, brought  
youth a merry crew  
Of proffered friends ; the price, self-slaying  
love.

Proud youth repulsed them. She and  
they withdrew.

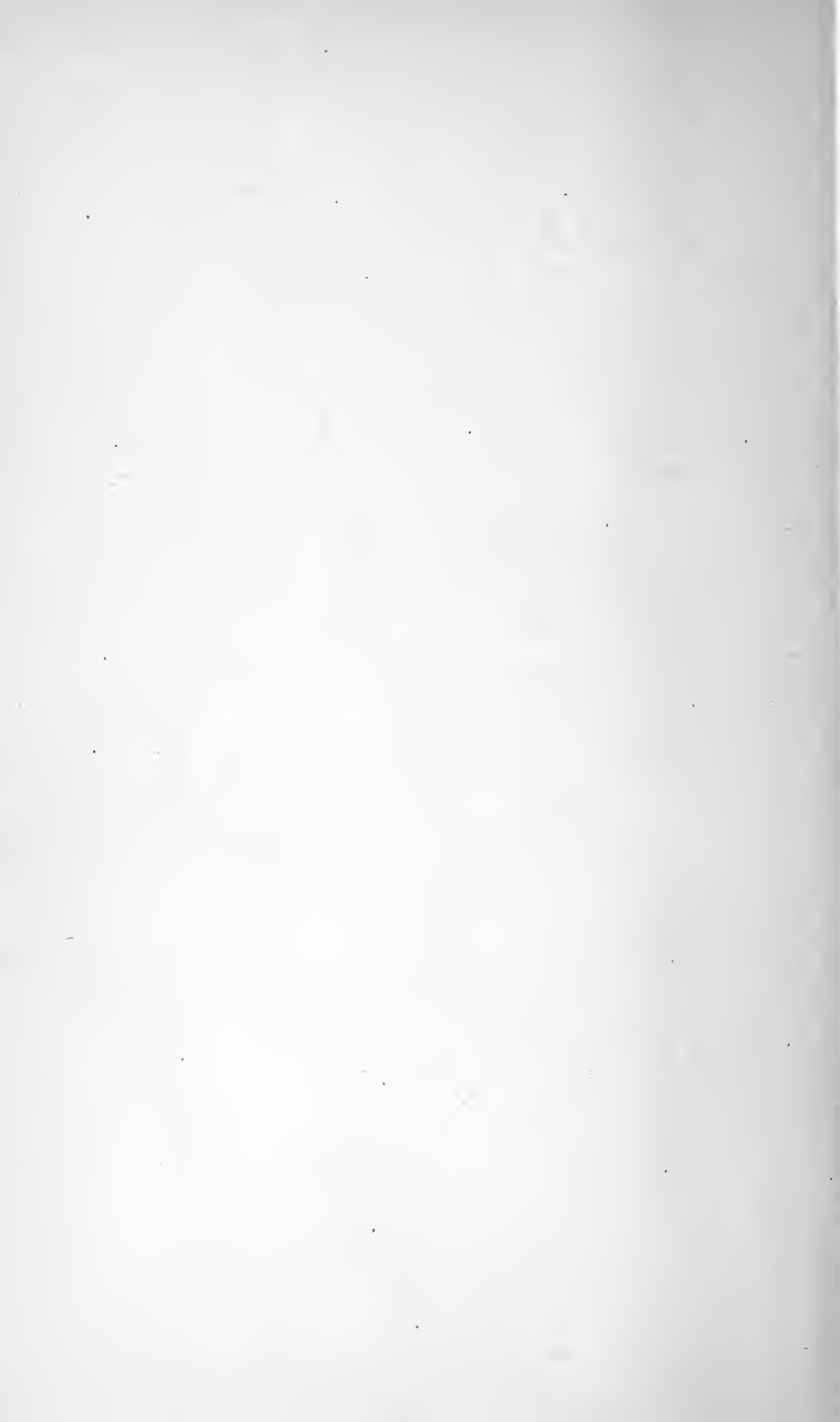
Then she brought half the troop ; the cost,  
the same.

My man's heart wavered : should I take  
the few,  
And pay the whole ? But while I went  
and came,  
Fate had decided. She and they with-  
drew.

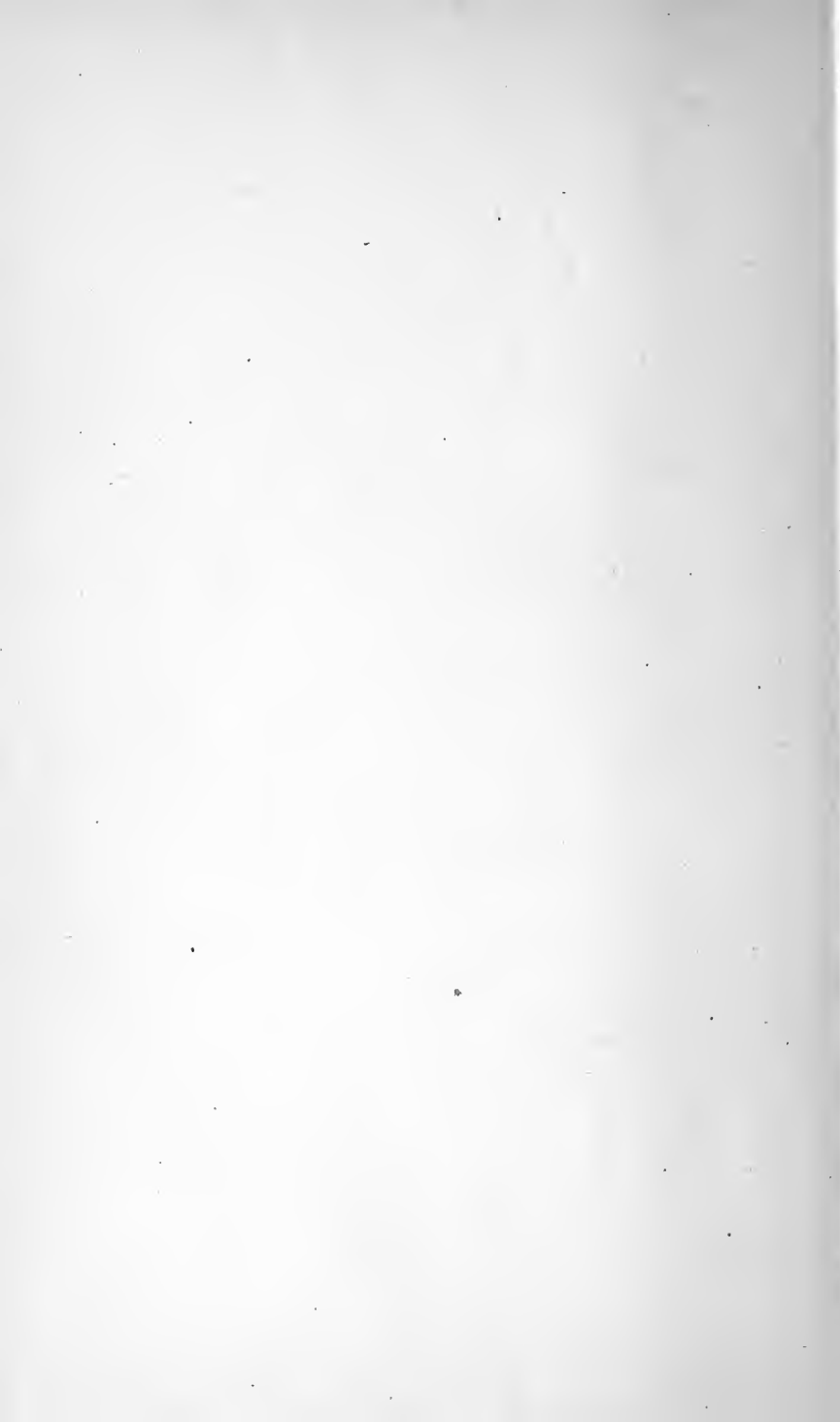
Once more she came, with two. Now life's  
midday  
Left fewer hours before me. Lonelier  
grew  
The house and heart. But should the late  
purse pay  
The earlier price? And she and they  
withdrew.

At last I saw Age his forerunners send.  
Then came the Sibyl, still with kindly  
eyes  
And close-locked lips, and offered me one  
friend, —  
Thee, my one darling ! With what  
tears and cries

I claimed and claim thee ; ready now to  
pay  
The perfect love that leaves no self to  
slay !











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